

A life lived in the service of art and industry is a thing worth celebrating!

John McKinnon's artistic career spans fifty years and includes a wide range of focus: carving, design, modelling, mould-making, painting, drawing, printmaking, welding, fabrication, installation, casting, teaching and myriad other pursuits. And whether you subscribe to the whole 10,000 hour rule popularized by Malcolm Gladwell, or not, one can only assume that fifty years outstrips mere mastery of skills and materials.

The work that has been included in *Time Warp: A 50-year Retrospective* is but a survey of John's expansive inventory, but it gives a sense of the process and evolution of an artist finding his way. As Henry Miller famously said, "one's destination is never a place but rather a new way of looking at things". Such a sentiment can be seen both in the materials (paper, stone, metal) that McKinnon employs and how they are treated – hewn, ground, poured, built up, worn down, polished, and practiced; a relentless pursuit of form and aesthetic ideals.

To get a true measure of John's all-in approach one would need to leave the gallery and walk the grounds of his expansive and eccentric acreage, which fully examples art-lived-large, Kootenay-style. If we could haul the massive, mouldering sculptures and hand-built houses and gardens and the pond with lights and lily pads and contemplative pieces all moss covered, into the gallery space, we would get ever closer to the measure of the man. The experiments and art overgrown in the grass inform the polished works on display and it is of benefit that there will be a short film released during the duration of this exhibition which will give viewers a sense of this aspect of the artist and the ever-evolving creative world that he is building. Philip Roth said, "the road to hell is paved with works-in-progress" but I would argue that it is the only way to get to the most meaningful places.

The sketch books & drawings provide a privileged view into process and like Henry Moore or Jacob Epstein, these studies give a glimpse of gesture and line, the fluidity of form, mass and proportion. One can see traces of traditional sculptural precedent in John's work – the marble gaze of 'Persephone Contemplating Spring' could be a cousin to Jean-Antoine Houdon's 'Diana' (1778). Similarly, 'Shaman Dance' from John's Arctic Series (1999) brings to mind the work of Henri Gaudier-Brzeska—difficult legacy and all, particularly through such works as Red Stone Dancer (c.1913). The gallery label for a showing of this work in 2020 describes it thusly:

Gaudier-Brzeska gathered and incorporated sculptural ideas from many different cultures in his work. At the British Museum he looked at the ancient Greek and Assyrian rooms and the Ethnographical Gallery in the upper floor. This contained artworks taken – sometimes forcibly – from indigenous peoples around the world. In Red Stone Dancer Gaudier-Brzeska draws on these sources to create his own sculptural language, with geometrical elements such as the triangle and circle imprinted on its face and breast. Its stance suggests a twisting movement compressed into a moment of stillness. (Tate Modern)

John's work also finds influence in other cultures and he has a penchant for utilizing triangulation within his compositions.

'Owl Flying,' the black marble piece that hits you with a sense of ponderous perfection, feels akin to the confident abstraction of Constantin Brancusi. And yet there is no need to find linkages to the past in all the works, as there are just as many departures from tradition as there are linkages. A perfect example of a new sculptural language that is all his own is the engraved and painted marble piece that illustrates far more than the seven deadly sins all that is good and bad and ugly of "Who We Are". To quote Aldous Huxley "*Experience is not what happens to a man; it is what a man does with what happens to him.*"

Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, and we are not always going to agree, but I am grateful that John has been willing to engage in a difficult discussion that I think is an important part of this retrospective and also another link to classical traditions within art history in general; the concept of male gaze and objectification of the female form. One sees beauty while another sees problematic symbols – and the very different views that we hold on this subject will be representative of many of the people who enter the space, with varying degrees between. There is no right or wrong in this – it is about perspective – and the gallery is the perfect place to explore both appreciation and dissent. The art world teams with nymphs and sirens and naked women eating lunch in parks, we are not shocked but it is never wrong to question convention.

The serigraph print "The Fall of the Great American Empire" (1972) and the iron fist that greets the viewer are early works that illustrate beautifully the beginning of John's artistic journey. As Gore Vidal coined "Style is knowing who you are, what you want to say, and not giving a damn." Congratulations John on fifty years of a life lived in the service of art – it is an inspiration to those of us who hold art in the highest esteem.

Arin Fay, Curator